

Sharon Historical Society Board Meeting Feb 3, 2022 Minutes

The Board met at 7 PM on Thursday, Feb. 3, in hybrid mode, most members on Zoom and some in person at the museum.

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM

Present: Brad Larson (Pres), Don Williams (VP), Beth McGregor (Sec'y), Carolyn Weeks (Treas), Doug Southworth (Chief Archivist), Maria Anderson, Joe Blansfield, Marie Cuneo, Debby DeBassio, Carol Gannon, Hana Jenner, Jimmie Keating, Paul Lauenstein, Shirley Schofield, Meg Winikates.

Brad opened the meeting with a request to clarify policy around observers at Board meetings, noting that it had been common practice but we had no formal policy on it. It was generally agreed that members should be welcome to observe but should reserve ahead if they wish to speak, and that comments should be time-limited unless the person is invited to give a report. Joe noted that the Board can always reserve the right to go into executive session and ask visitors to leave for that portion of the meeting. Carol and Debbie expressed reservations, saying we should get better organized and clarify our bylaws first; they also noted that with such a large Board and so much business at meetings there might be too many cooks in the kitchen and it could slow down proceedings. Maria felt that dues-paying members should be allowed to attend; Marie felt that meetings should be open even for prospective members to come and listen. Don suggested that it was important to stick to the agenda and allow brief (1-2 minute) comments only at the end of the meeting if time permits. Hana explained that the Garden Club has board-only meetings followed a week later by meetings open to members, and Brad suggested that we could stream meetings; neither idea met with much support.

Moved (Don), seconded, and voted to allow Society members to observe Board meetings; if they wish to present anything they need to notify us in advance and may be subject to a time limit.

Membership Database Report: Brad invited Kristin Slater to join the meeting to report on her Membership Committee work with the Wild Apricot membership database. She is developing a draft project plan for its adoption and use. She emphasized that it meets multiple needs: easy membership tracking, automatic renewals that can be emailed on the 1st or 15th of any month, event management, website templates, an events calendar, online payments, an online store. She plans to focus on membership first and let some of the other features wait. She is working on mapping membership fields, to include additional things like member interests and original date of membership along with all the basic contact information including email addresses. There will be a checklist, and Membership Committee members will have duties once it's set up. She noted that WA provides standard member renewal notice, invoice and donation/dues acknowledgment forms, but we'd want to personalize them. One great feature for the future is that it can handle rolling renewals, so that a membership extends one full year from date of joining, with automatic reminders and invoices sent out year-round, thus encouraging people to join whenever they become interested, as well as spreading out the dues income across the year. For now memberships are set to expire June 15. If someone does not respond to the

automatic reminders and invoices, they would be flagged in a report (reports are easy to run) and we could contact them. If they don't renew, we can suspend their membership as of the expiration date, but keep a record of them.

She also noted WA's value in event management. The events calendar can be linked to member records; if people register for events, we can see who turned up for what events, which helps target audiences and volunteers for various types of activities.

One limitation she has encountered so far is in the 'bundling' feature; she needs to record all names in a household as one bundle in order not to lose any information on the family members. She also stressed the caveat that there needs to be a consistent format for data entry; anyone working on data entry would need to follow a format manual.

Asked if we should buy the WA package now, Kristin said that she can continue to test the system, populating it with up to 50 names for free; she suggested that a few of us can work with it for up three months, enter some events, and see how it goes. We had previously authorized a renewable trial purchase for three months, but she noted that it's cheaper to purchase for a year, so felt it was better to play with it for free, and if satisfied it will be easy to buy with one phone call. She plans to report to the Board a week before each board meeting. Brad expressed a desire to start on the website option it offers. Paul suggested that we continue the free service for a month and reconsider what to do next month. General agreement with the plan and thanks to Kristin were expressed, and she was encouraged to proceed; no formal vote was taken.

Historical Reflection: Shirley, inspired by the many comments she saw in the past week about the big snowfall and the unplowed sidewalks, decided to make that the subject of her reflection. She noted that in the first half of the last century, there weren't many sidewalks in Sharon; people just walked in the roads. There were concrete sidewalks near the center of town, extending only as far as Summit Avenue, and some gravel sidewalks edged with stones elsewhere. Through the 1940's, the town had one sidewalk plow, with a wooden triangular blade, pulled by a horse, with a DPW employee holding the reins. In the center of town, men shoveled snow by hand and threw it up onto a truck to cart it off and dump it. A second truck then came by with sand and rock salt; one or two men on the back threw the salted sand onto the sidewalk.

There were two good sledding places for the children to enjoy. One was Pettee's Hill (although it was then full of potholes and rough spots that could send you flying; it has since been smoothed out). The other was on Chestnut Street, where the road was blocked off with sawhorses and children could start at South Pleasant Street and slide all the way down to the train station. Some children had sleds, but most used baking sheets or pieces of cardboard to slide on.

President's report: Brad suggested that we return to reviewing Board member visions and priorities at next month's meeting. He asked that before the meeting we each email the whole group with our top two choices from other people's responses, which Beth will collect in one document. He gratefully acknowledged both the Saturday and Sunday groups staffing the museum's open hours, asking members to raise their hands if they came in on either day. He expressed particular appreciation for the muffins provided on Saturdays by Millie and others,

recalling that small museums he consulted with in Norway served coffee and snacks (in their case waffles), which fostered community. He also complimented Maria and Carolyn's good work on Sundays (over tea but no muffins), compiling a multi-year financial summary and proposed budget, an important contribution to the Society as a whole. There was applause all around for both crews.

Vice President's/B&G Report: Don thanked all who helped clean up after the big storm. He also reported that the elevator company has billed us for their first service and will proceed at some point soon to load testing and phone setup that will hopefully bring us into ADA compliance and permit public use again. ADT Alarm awaits our coordination with them, and will need a credit card number before proceeding with alarm system improvements. He has also been working on membership with Kristin; he noted that we currently have 275 members (70 life members and 205 paying annual dues.)

Treasurer's Report: Carolyn asked for any questions on her previously submitted monthly report, which showed receipts of \$250.52, disbursements of \$2001.36, and a checkbook balance of 2257.83, with a total funds balance of \$198,248.97. She explained that the \$2.50 royalty check was from Blue Mustang Press, probably for the red book. She noted that she would need to transfer money to pay incoming bills, and proposed to take \$5000-7000 out of Sharon Credit Union CD.

Moved (Don), seconded and voted to transfer \$7000 from the Sharon Credit Union account from the \$22,000 Sharon Credit Union CD into the checking account.

She also reported that she had solicited three bids from accountants to replace our retiring accountant, Roy Schreiber. The best offer was from a woman in Duxbury, Marya Babson, who works with non-profits and was recommended by our old accountant. Her proposed fee was also the lowest of the three, close to what Schreiber has charged us.

Moved (Don), seconded and voted to authorize Carolyn to make arrangements with Marya Babson to do our taxes.

There was brief discussion of auditing our books. Carolyn expressed willingness to check on potential auditors.

Secretary's Report: Beth noted minor corrections to the first draft of the January minutes, and went on to report on her efforts to find and organize old meeting minutes and other Society records in the office, both on paper in the file cabinets and in the computer. She noted that she could find no minutes after 2015, and spotty records from intermittent years before 2010. Doug said that some minutes were in the archives, but probably not recent ones. Shirley had some ideas about their location and offered to meet with her; they'll figure out a time.

Moved (Paul), seconded and voted to approve the Jan. 6 minutes as corrected.

Archivist's Report: Doug expressed appreciation to the Monday archives team: Jean Zaniewski, Hana Jenner, Joanne Douglas and Judy Bookbinder. He reported that all the images are prepared to go to Digital Commonwealth, and he expects word soon that DC will be ready to take them. He would like to purchase up to \$500 in archival supplies soon, including file folders and boxes to hold materials going to Digital Commonwealth, taking advantage of a

Gaylord sale this month. He identified the possibility of an archival supplies mini-grant from the state Historical Records board, but timing to apply for it is very short. He is willing to use his own credit card and submit for reimbursement, or use the Society's credit card, currently in Don's possession. There was general consensus on his proceeding with the purchase, with no formal vote.

“Sharon Memories” Program: Debbie requested approval to host a Sharon Memories gathering on Saturday morning, May 14th, with the theme “When UFO's Came to Sharon.” She noted the popularity of the last one, on music. It would begin with coffee and pastry at 9:30, with the program 10-12. She'd like it to appear in the upcoming newsletter.

Moved (Beth), seconded, and voted to approve the program as planned.

Newsletter: Paul reminded people that the deadline for submitting articles to him as editor is February 7, and encouraged us to submit pictures to accompany the articles, which make the Heritage Hunter more interesting. To meet the requirements of notice for the March quarterly meeting, it needs to get to the post office for mailing by Feb 21, which means the final PDF should go to printer on Friday the 12th. Carol usually gives the printer a week, and will give them a heads-up now to expect 8 pages so they'll have paper in stock. Shirley said that while she wants to acknowledge the Donnell gift in the newsletter, she would rather not mention the amount, following the example of another organization which received the same gift and is not publicizing the amount. She noted that Mrs. Donnell was good teacher at Cottage Street School; the gift came from the estate of her son Robert Donnell (Sharon High Class of 1953). Carolyn asked if our gift had any restrictions, as the School Committee's did; Shirley replied that ours is unrestricted.

Committees: Brad offered to chair the Technology Committee, focusing primarily on the website. He is also responsible for appointing the Nominating Committee, and said he would like to confer with the other officers first and would prefer to renominate last year's committee but is open to other suggestions.

Debbie asked if there is an updated committee list since December. Hana said she would send out the January list, and Beth will try to capture it in a shared Google document.

Joe noted that we need to straighten out the bylaw requirements for committees to reflect actual needs and practices. Meanwhile he's willing to respond to any immediate committee needs.

Kristin has offered to co-chair the Membership Committee; Don would like to be her co-chair. Beth offered to chair or co-chair the ad hoc committee to review Bylaws and Policies.

Budget: Maria shared and explained a screenshot of a spreadsheet, still a work in progress, prepared with the help of Carolyn and Hana. They have tried to document trends over the years since 2012, ending with a planned budget for 2022. She will email a copy to Board members. Calling our attention to the bottom line, she noted that we consistently spend more than we take in and almost always run a substantial deficit.

On the income side, she would like to show lots of detail about income sources, to know what makes money and help us make decisions accordingly going forward.

Expenses are also itemized as much as possible. In the budget, committees all got a little bit of money; she requested that they ask for more if needed.

The budget shows a \$15,000+ projected shortfall. Beth asked if it included the Ways and Means Committee's plans to conduct a town-wide appeal. Maria replied that it wasn't budgeted for yet.

Other Business: Beth asked about the possibility of developing website-based targeted addresses for officers and key committees. Brad said that this is a good goal, but can't be done quite yet; it involves some cost, time spent by Morey and Brad, and some improvements to the website.

There being no further business brought forward, the meeting was adjourned by consensus at 8:58 PM.

Next meeting: Thursday, March 3, 7:00 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Elisabeth McGregor
Secretary